

Course Overview - Intro to Piano

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s): **AP Language & Composition**
Time Period:
Length:
Status: **Published**

Course Overview

Aligned to Standards: NJSLs 2020...

Revision Date: July 23, 2026

In compliance with the NJ Student Learning Standards, climate change, career readiness, DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusivity), as well as other standards have been integrated within the NBCRSD curricula (NJ Administrative Code Title 6A: chapter 8; Title 18A: chapter 35).

Course Overview

Sequence- Unit Titles, Summaries, and Number of weeks per unit (total = 18 semester/36 year)

Unit 1: Introduction to Playing (4 class periods)

Unit 1 introduces students to the fundamentals of piano performance and basic music literacy. Students will develop proper piano technique by learning correct posture, hand position, finger numbers, and appropriate use of the damper pedal. Musical concepts introduced include high and low pitch, dynamic markings (forte, piano, and mezzo forte), note values and lengths, measures, double bar lines, repeat signs, and pedal markings.

Students will also explore the music alphabet, interval relationships (seconds and thirds), transposition, C and G pentascales, and recognize musical form, patterns, and sequences. Throughout the unit, students will apply these concepts through guided performance activities, building a strong technical and musical foundation for future study.

Unit 2: Orientation to the Staff (4 class periods)

Unit 2 focuses on developing students' music-reading skills through an understanding of the grand staff and standard music notation. Students will learn to identify and read notes in both the treble and bass clefs, understand the purpose of the staff, ledger lines, and interval relationships such as seconds, and interpret common rhythmic and expressive markings.

Topics include the grand staff, treble and bass clefs, time signatures (4/4 and 3/4), accent marks, ties, ledger lines, treble and bass clef note names, legato articulation, and sight-reading strategies. Throughout the unit, students will strengthen their ability to read, interpret, and accurately perform beginning piano repertoire with increasing fluency and confidence.

Unit 3: Reading Reinforcement (4 class periods)

Unit 3 builds upon students' understanding of the grand staff by introducing the origins and functions of the G Clef and F Clef, reinforcing how these symbols identify note placement on the staff. Students will expand

their note-reading fluency by learning Treble Clef G and Bass Clef F, while continuing to strengthen their ability to read and perform music with confidence.

The unit also introduces the Coda as a musical navigation symbol, helping students understand how composers organize larger musical forms. Through guided instruction, performance practice, and sight-reading activities, students will improve their ability to interpret notation, follow musical road maps, and perform beginning piano literature with greater accuracy and musical understanding.

Unit 4: More About Staff Reading (4 class periods)

Unit 4 expands students' music-reading and performance skills by introducing thirds on the staff, strengthening their ability to recognize melodic and harmonic patterns. Students will deepen their understanding of rhythm through the study of the quarter rest, half rest, and whole rest, learning how periods of silence contribute to musical expression and accurate performance.

The unit also introduces the C Major (C) Chord, providing students with their first experience performing basic harmonic accompaniment at the piano. In addition, students will learn the musical navigation symbol D.C. al Fine, developing their ability to follow performance directions and understand larger musical forms. Through repertoire, sight-reading, and performance activities, students will build greater fluency in reading notation, interpreting musical symbols, and performing with rhythmic accuracy, harmonic awareness, and musical confidence.

Unit 5: More Bass Clef Note Reading (4 class periods)

Unit 5 expands students' music-reading and performance skills by introducing the Bass Clef notes C, D, and E, further strengthening fluency on the grand staff and reinforcing the relationship between written notation and the piano keyboard. Students will learn the rules for stem direction, developing a clearer understanding of standard music notation and improving the readability of written music.

The unit also introduces staccato articulation, enabling students to perform music with greater precision and expressive contrast by distinguishing between detached and connected styles of playing. In addition, students will learn to interpret first and second endings, expanding their understanding of musical navigation and repeated forms. Through sight-reading, performance practice, and repertoire, students will continue to build note-reading fluency, rhythmic accuracy, expressive musicianship, and confidence as increasingly independent pianists.

Unit 6: Eighth Notes (5 Class Periods)

Unit 6 expands students' rhythmic, harmonic, and expressive performance skills by introducing eighth notes, including the use of flags and beams, helping students perform more complex rhythmic patterns with accuracy and confidence. Students will continue to develop dynamic expression through the introduction of

mezzo piano (mp), crescendo, and diminuendo, learning how gradual changes in volume shape musical interpretation.

The unit also explores important musical concepts such as phrases, downbeats, upbeats, and the fermata, enabling students to better understand musical structure, phrasing, and expressive timing. Students will be introduced to the minuet as a traditional musical form and style, broadening their understanding of historical repertoire and performance practices.

Harmonic development continues with the study of the C Major chord and the Csus4 chord, allowing students to compare chord qualities and expand their accompaniment skills. In addition, students will learn to identify and perform Ledger Line B, extending their note-reading fluency beyond the staff. Through sight-reading, performance practice, and repertoire, students will integrate rhythm, harmony, articulation, dynamics, phrasing, and musical form to perform with increasing accuracy, expression, confidence, and independence.

Unit 7: Treble Space Notes and C Pentascale (6 class periods)

Unit 7 combines Chapters 7 and 8 of the Piano Lesson Book. Students expand their fluency on the grand staff by learning the Treble Clef space notes (F–A–C–E) and reinforcing the recognition of Treble Clef notes C–D–E–F–G, strengthening the connection between written notation and the piano keyboard.

The unit introduces crossovers and cross-hand arpeggios, developing greater hand coordination, keyboard awareness, and technical control as students learn to move smoothly across the keyboard while maintaining proper posture, hand position, and rhythmic accuracy. Harmonic understanding is expanded through the study of the F Major chord, allowing students to recognize and perform chord patterns in an additional key.

Unit 8: G Pentascales in 3 Locations (4 class periods)

Unit 8 utilizes **Chapter 9** of *Piano Lesson Book* and expands students' understanding of **keys, scales, and harmony** through the study of the **G Pentascale**, **G Major chord**, and **Gsus4 chord**. Students develop greater keyboard fluency by performing the G Pentascale with proper fingering, hand position, and technique while strengthening their understanding of key relationships and tonal patterns.

The unit deepens students' harmonic knowledge by introducing the **G Major chord** and **Gsus4 chord**, allowing them to compare chord qualities and recognize how small changes in chord structure create different harmonic colors and musical expression. Through technical exercises, chord studies, sight-reading, and performance of increasingly challenging repertoire, students apply scales, chords, and harmonic patterns to improve accuracy, coordination, and musical fluency.

Unit 9: Accidentals (4 class periods)

Unit 9 utilizes **Chapter 10** of the *Lesson Book* and introduces students to the foundational concepts of **major scales** through the study of **half steps, whole steps, sharps, flats, natural signs**, and the construction of a **major pentascale**. Students develop a deeper understanding of how accidentals alter pitch and how whole- and half-step patterns create the structure of major tonalities.

Unit 10: Intervals- 4ths, 5ths, & 6ths (4 class periods)

Unit 10 utilizes Chapter 11 of the Piano Lesson Book and expands students' understanding of melodic relationships through the study of 4ths, 5ths, and 6ths. Building upon their knowledge of seconds and thirds, students learn to recognize, read, and perform larger intervals on both the grand staff and the keyboard, strengthening their ability to identify musical patterns and navigate the piano with greater confidence.

The unit emphasizes the relationship between interval recognition, note reading, and technical fluency by helping students connect visual patterns on the staff with physical movement on the keyboard. Through technical exercises, sight-reading, and performance activities, students develop greater accuracy in reading intervallic patterns, improve hand coordination, and enhance their ability to perform music fluently without relying solely on individual note identification.

[Reporting Student Progress](#) (link to NB's Assessment System)

All courses follow a balanced assessment system with Practice and Assessments. Each category includes formative, summative and alternative assessments.

[Accommodations and Modifications](#) (link to menu)

Integrated accommodations and modifications for special education students, English language learners, students at risk of school failure, gifted and talented students, and students with 504 plans.